Perhaps Beria would not have dared to say this openly; Himmler—might have done so. It is in such company that one must place this “revolution” as it imposes a return to the land, the land of the pre-Angkor period, by methods worthy of Nazi Gauleiters.

François Ponchaud’s book can be read only with shame by those of us who supported the Khmer Rouge cause. It should be shaming as well to those in the Nixon administration who bombed and laid waste Cambodia, undermining Sihanouk’s regime, and refused to pursue negotiations with him in Peking, making an unmitigated Khmer Rouge victory all the more likely. And it will cause distress to those of us journalists who, after the massacre of seventeen of our colleagues in April and May 1971, tried to explain these deaths as part of the hazards of covering a disorganized guerrilla war. In fact our poor comrades were assassinated—some, we now know, clubbed to death—by the valiant guerrillas of Khieu Samphan, the “socialist” Khmer who now bars foreign observers from Cambodian soil. His people remain in terrorstricken confinement, one of this regime’s more rational decisions: for how could it let the outside world see its burying of a civilization in pre-history, its massacres? When men who talk of Marxism are able to say, as one quoted by Ponchaud does, that only 1.5 or 2 million young Cambodians, out of 6 million, will be enough to rebuild a pure society, one can no longer simply speak of barbarism; what barbarians have ever acted in this way? Here is only madness.

On finishing Ponchaud’s book I wondered why, after the Bertrand Russell tribunal, which justly indicted US aggression, there should not be a new public tribunal to consider and denounce such crimes, committed in the name of revolution. For may not the most sinister crimes of all be those that betray the principles of socialism and assassinate human hope itself?

CAMBODIA: CORRECTIONS

Noam Chomsky has kindly called to my attention, and has circulated to some members of the press, a number of corrections of my review of François Ponchaud’s Cambodge: Àmiézéro [NYR, March 31].

First, I attributed to “texts distributed in Phnom Penh” the injunction that not only enemies of the regime but “their offspring until the last one” should be suppressed. On page seventy-three of his book, Father Ponchaud does not in fact quote this phrase from an official text but says it is a “leitmotif” of the justifications that are made for suppression. He earlier cites a number of slogans similar to the ones I quoted, which are being used to justify the current “purification.” For example, “It is not enough to cut off a weed, it must be pulled up by the roots.” Such slogans, he says, are used both on the government radio and in meetings. He adds that:

Several reports by witnesses [Témoignages] even affirm that in numerous localities the wives and children of officers have also been done away with.

Secondly, I should not have identified the newspaper Prachachat as a “government paper,” but rather as a Thai paper, which on June 10, 1976, carried an interview with a Khmer Rouge official who said, as Ponchaud writes, that he found the revolutionary method of the Vietnamese “very slow,” requiring “a lot of time to separate the good people from the counter-revolutionaries.” It was the Thai reporter of this paper who drew the conclusion I quoted that the Khmers have “overturned the basket and with it all the fruit it contained, and will, from now on, choose only the fruit that suits them perfectly.”

My reference to the death of “one quarter” of the population in a single year must be corrected. Ponchaud’s text is as follows:

The unremitting work, the insufficient food, the deplorable sanitary conditions, the terror and summary executions permit us to imagine the nightmarish human cost of the Khmer revolution. In 1970, the Cambodian population was estimated at 8 million people... In 1975, Prince Sihanouk—here in agreement with the Americans—calculated the war dead at 600,000, to which figure must be added 600,000 wounded. On 17 April 1976, the first anniversary of the liberation, the Kampuchean authorities announced that there were 800,000 dead and 240,000 disabled veterans [invalides de guerre].

As for those who died during the “peace,” no one can put forward a figure with exactitude; but it is certainly more than a million. At the end of 1975, official diplomatic sources estimated a figure of 800,000 dead; sources from the American Embassy, 1.2 million; and the American relief services [services
In Bangkok, 1.4 million. No one will ever know the precise number of victims but from listening to the accounts of refugees of the deaths in their respective families, the number is without doubt considerable.

Noam Chomsky, I should add, has questioned some of the figures cited by Father Ponchaud. He deeply distrusts those from U.S. sources. He finds it extremely difficult to see why deaths from malnutrition and disease should be attributed to the Khmer Rouge rather than to the Americans who devastated the countryside and forced the population into the cities. He argues, among other criticisms, that it is unlikely that the Cambodians would have reported that 800,000 were killed and 240,000 disabled by the war, and that Ponchaud may have reversed these figures.

Noam Chomsky's corrections have caused me great distress. By pointing out serious errors in citation, he calls into question not only my respect for texts and the truth, but also the cause I was trying to defend. I particularly regret the misleading attributions I mentioned above and I should have checked more accurately the figures on victims, figures deriving from sources that are, moreover, questionable. My reading of Ponchaud's book was hasty, emotionally intense, too quick in selecting polemical points. But if I must plead guilty in handling the details of my review, I would plead innocent concerning its fundamental argument.

Faced with an enterprise as monstrous as the new Cambodian government, should we see the main problem as one of deciding exactly which person uttered an inhuman phrase, and whether the regime has murdered thousands or hundreds of thousands of wretched people? Is it of crucial historical importance to know whether the victims of Dachau numbered 100,000 or 500,000? Or if Stalin had 1,000 or 10,000 Poles shot at Katyn?

I fully understand the concerns of Noam Chomsky, whose honesty and sense of freedom I admire immensely, in criticizing, with his admirable sense of exactitude, the accusations directed at the Cambodian regime. He is seeking to establish the truth and also, I would think, to combat criticism which may have the effect of serving the interests of the Nixon-Ford establishment and its allies. Such criticism may please the champions of intervention in Indochina, who were responsible for the war in Cambodia and who are guilty—as I said in my review—of initiating and prolonging the bloodbath which still afflicts that unhappy country today. However, because denunciations of Stalinism pleased Senator McCarthy, would that have been good reason for remaining silent about the Gulag?

The pseudo revolutionaries in Cambodia have locked their country away from the eyes of the world, have turned many of their people into cadavers or mere cattle; they have not only killed Lon Nol's officials but have also murdered their women and children, maintaining order with clubs and guns. I think the problem that presents itself today is that of the life of a people. And it is not only because I once argued for the victory of this very regime, and feel myself partially guilty for what is happening under it, that I believe I can say: there is a time, when a great crime is taking place, when it is better to speak out, in whatever company, than to remain silent.
APPENDIX 3

[From Le Figaro (Paris), Feb. 11, 1977] ¹

A DOCTOR ZHIVAGO AMONG THE KHMER ROUGE ²

At forty, Dr. Oum Nal, stomatologist from the Medical Faculty in Paris, was a deputy chief physician in the big Phnom Penh Hospital, the Preah Ket Mealea. Built at the beginning of the Protectorate, the former hospice had 500 beds but now has 1,500. However, on the last day of the war, in the morning of the 17th of April 1975, more than 2,000 sick and injured civilians, the majority of them women, children and elderly people, crowded the smallest free spaces: halls, corridors, storerooms. The previous night had been particularly murderous; rockets exploded in the overpopulated refugee districts and the injured were streaming.

At about 10 o’clock in the morning, Dr. Oum Nal, arms loaded with serum ampoules, was rushing toward the hall of reception. In a corridor, a soldier clad in black, and armed with a Chinese rifle AK 47, saw him coming and summoned him as he was passing by:

“Where are you going, comrade?”

The Red Khmer, the first to reach the hospital, was alone. He interrupted the respectful explanations of the doctor.

“Leave all this!” he said in an even tone. “From now on the Angkar ³ will attend to your injured. The American imperialists are going to bomb the city. . . . You have to take shelter outside of the city. . . .” Then he added: “Useless to burden yourself with luggage. You will be back in a night or two. . . .”

“It was a brazen lie,” Oum Nal says today in telling his story. “Did we allow ourselves to be duped? We accepted these lies as a glimmer of hope in the total darkness of despair.”

The doctor went out on the street and was swept away by a gigantic stream of humanity in flight. Every hundred meters, small dark soldiers direct the stream toward the north by firing into the air or into the crowd: on an individual in a uniform, on a student with too long hair or on an exhausted old man. . . . An enormous terrified herd pushed forward by some sheep dogs!

After three weeks of wandering, the doctor was stranded in one of the “new villages” in the vicinity of Phnom Bassot. In reality, this was only an area of swampy jungle. Like his colleagues, Oum Nal got a plot of soil to clear up and to cultivate.

The chief of the village was a former rickshaw driver in Phnom Penh. He had recognized the chief doctor of the hospital but pretended to ignore him; otherwise he would have been obliged to kill him.

At the end of September, when the first plantings of corn, manioc and sweet potatoes were getting ripe, the inhabitants of the new villages in the region of Phnom Bassot, 200,000 to 300,000 of former Phnompenhese were deported to the Sisophon province: the Fifth Region. The railway convoys were formed at the Pursat Station. The overcrowded trains made the distance of 150 kilometers in about 10 hours. At the arrival station, a welcoming committee of 14 members received and distributed the deportees throughout neighboring villages.

Dr. Oum Nal belonged to the 7th convoy, which upon its arrival in Sisophon numbered 7,560 passengers. He had travelled on the roof of the carriage. “Like in the film of Doctor Zhivago, the last film I saw in Paris in 1966. I relived his adventures.”

In front of the station a Kamaphibal ⁴ of the welcoming committee, with the aid of a loudspeaker, asked the ‘technicians’ to register on a special list. By

¹ Printed with permission from Le Figaro (Paris) France.
³ “Angkar” means organization, that is the only Party, deified and all powerful.
⁴ “Kamaphibal” official of the civilian and military organization.
"technicians" the Red Khmers understood all the intellectuals, from a University Professor to a high school graduate, from an engineer to a specialized worker, from a physician to an orderly... all the intellectuals who had escaped the systematic massacre of the early days.

While he was waiting in the crowd of deportees, a Red Khmer summoned Dr. Oum Nal by name, using his title.

"I was scared! ... Then I recognized this Khmer. He was the son of my neighbor in Phnom Penh, a jeweler. He had followed the courses of nursing. I had the opportunity of attending to one of his children. He welcomed me with a certain sympathy but invited me abruptly to register immediately as a technician.

Oum Nal soon discovered that his former orderly was the chief of the local medical services. He was also a brother of a higher-ranking Angkar, corresponding to a Provincial Governor, the chief of the Fifth Region in the new regime. This man introduced me to the Committee as a civilian physician, honest and devoted to the people. One day, he invited me to have a lunch with the members of the committee. What a stroke of good luck! My first meal since April 17th! There was rice as much as I wanted... with salt fish and vegetables! ...

Thanks to this high protection and his cleverness, Dr. Oum Nal succeeded in making himself accepted in the household of the committee as a permanent guest or rather like a boarding servant.

"In order to show my 'transformation' I assumed the responsibility for domestic chores in the house: dish washing, laundry, floor cleaning, fetching water; peeling vegetables. But every day I diverted a handful of dry rice in preparation for my escape."

Dr. Oum Nal lived two entire months with the revolutionary committee. The cadre, head of the medical services, used to come to consult him, secretly of course, on medical problems.

"He thus informed me of his anxiety: 90 percent of the women did not undergo menstruation and became sterile. The pills, extracted from plants, seemed ineffective to stop this strange epidemic. The causes of this nearly general irregularity were evident: nutritional deficiency, forced labor, psychic traumas, etc. But to enumerate them in this way would mean to criticize the infallibility of the Angkar, a crime punishable by the death penalty."

**A FRIGHTENING PICTURE**

"In the 'new villages,' set up in the jungle, the mortality rate reached then more than 50 percent, and the survivors did not fare any better. Production, the main worry of the Angkar, went down to zero..."

"The wife of my protector was in charge of the maternity hospital in Sisophon," says Oum Nal. "In this establishment, due to lack of care and competence, most of the newly born died by accident from puerperal fever... My former orderly asked me then to translate into Cambodian, always secretly, a capital work, a handbook on obstetrics written in French."

The technical statements of the doctor constitute a truly horrifying picture. The Cambodian people, of Khmer race, an isolated branch in Asia of the Aryan family, heir of a lofty Sanskrit civilization, are perishing from physical misery or through collective suicide.

The presence of the "former doctor" in a revolutionary committee was against the directives of the Angkar. Oum Nal was told that he could not remain any longer in Sisophon. He had to join on the spot a group of 45 technicians, architects, lawyers, physicians etc. ready for departure.

On the second of December they were taken to Preah Net Preah, a village in the midst of rice paddies about 20 kilometers from Sisophon. The population of this region had been deported, and the houses were empty. The "technicians" settled down in this place. It was the time of harvest. They started harvesting with a sickle.

"There we followed a normal regime: ten hours of work; about 2 ounces [70 grammes] of rice and a sprinkle of salt for two daily meals."

On January 5th, 1976, at midday, the village chief interrupted the work in the rice paddy and assembled the 'technicians.' "The Angkar invite you to take part in a meeting" he said. "Don't take more of your belongings than you need for spending one night outside the village."

Nobody among them had ever come back to Preah Net Preah. Prudently Dr. Oum Nal took his bag. By nightfall, they arrived in Chup, a village on the road between Selm Reap and Sisophon, famous for its pagoda.
Surrounded by barbed wire, teeming with sentries, the Chup Pagoda had been changed into a Center of Political Indoctrination or rather a center for screening intellectuals. In the courtyard, they had built two long straw huts. One of them was used as a dormitory and detention for the probationers. The second one was a study hall with wooden benches, a blackboard, a platform, and a rare luxury, a microphone for the speaker.

"We were 397 probationers," stated Dr. Oum Nal, "nearly all from Phnom Penh." The training started at 7 o'clock in the morning with a heavy breakfast: rice soup as much as one liked and fried fish, served by revolutionary girls with revolutionary songs and music!

"Enough to impress the people who were dying from famine for the last nine months. . . . Then after a short recreation, we were invited to come to the class hall."

Another surprise was that the Chief of the Fifth Region, the powerful Provincial Governor, came in a car in person, escorted by armed jeeps. He inaugurated the session with a speech: "The Angkar is happy to receive you here. The Angkar needs you... Today we begin a new era of happiness. Our country has overcome difficulties, the heritage of the imperialist super-traitors. Their regime has become stable. Kampuchea has been given a democratic constitution, which will be read to you. As a counterpart of its goodness to you, Angkar asks you only to be loyal, sincere and straightforward . . ."

After a lavish lunch, they were given a sheet of paper each with a ball point for every group of ten. A Kamphibal asked them to write their autobiography, and in the name of the Angkar, who knows everything, they were encouraged to be frank and confident.

"This was once more a lie, a fiendish trap. Nevertheless, some amongst us spoke 'frankly' of their desires and longings, which could be summarized in three points:

1. reunification of dispersed families;
2. freedom of worship; and
3. opening of the universities.

On that evening, the Angkar staged a joyful, artistic and revolutionary party for the probationers. The following morning at dawn, the imprudent young people, who had expressed their sincere longing were herded in the courtyard. The soldiers tied their hands to their backs and put them on the truck.

The day was identical with the preceding day spent in writing their autobiography. Oum Nal took great care to present the same version. In the last chapter—desiderata—he wrote: "I wish to pass my life producing rice and to devote my strength to the Angkar."

"The fifth day, May 10th in the morning, at the beginning of the meeting" he relates "the Kamphibal called out a list of 45 names, among them mine. They asked to get out, to take our belongings and to stand, two by two. Armed soldiers surrounded us... After an agonizing wait, a truck, escorted by an armed jeep, stopped in the courtyard. They told us to take a seat and the convoy left... towards the West."

Late in the afternoon, the truck stopped in a street of Battambang. The city was deserted, with here and there an armed sentry in front of a house or on a cross road. The escorting chief stepped out of the vehicle and said: "Brethren, comrades! Those whose names I will call, the Angkar invites to return to Phnom Penh."

DEPARTED FOREVER

"We were terrified" say Oum Nal. "This formula 'invited to return to Phnom Penh' had been used to take towards a place of massacre all those who will not change: the military, government employees, intellectuals..."

Twelve names were called, and the persons stepped down from the truck. The other were taken to the Central Jail in Battambang. It was abandoned since April 17, 1975. The first work of the new inmates was to restore it: "In Kampuchea there are no prisons any more" declared their guard to them.

In fact, the regime of the detainees did not differ from the normal schedules: for everyone: 10 hours of daily work, and the regulation ration of 70 grams [about two ounces] of rice with a sprinkle of salt.

"On January 20, another group of technicians joined us" says Oum Nal. "We recognized some of those who in Chup had been taken away the first day for having replied 'sincerely' to the chapter [paragraph] wishes and aspirations. They were unbelievably emaciated, filthy and covered with rags. They still had their hands tied to their back and the ropes cutting into their flesh caused purulent sores. They told us that they had been shut in a house in Battambang for fifteen
days, all in the same room, their feet attached to a central log, without being able to move, wallowing in their excrements...."

Other groups used to come periodically but did not remain for a long time. The procedure of departure was always the same. Without advance notice, they were assembled in the courtyard. The soldiers ransacked their belongings, took them outside one after the other, every 5 to 10 minutes. There the soldiers stripped them, bound their hands and feet and loaded them onto trucks where they were also attached to rails.... Then the truck went away, and they had never been seen again.

"Out of the first group, thirty of us remained" said Oum Nal. "Three more times the Khmers asked us to write our autobiographies.... We knew the trap. Nevertheless, each time one of us got caught. One of my friends, a physician from Phnom Penh, admitted in the end that he had been mobilized for some months as a medical officer. He disappeared the following morning...."

On March 1976, the 30 surviving from Oum Nal's group were called in turn....

"This time we were not invited to go back to Phnom Penh. We got on a truck in an orderly fashion with our belongings, which took us a few kilometers from there, to the Wat Kandal pagoda, changed into a kind of detention and reeducation camp. The regime was that of the Red Khmers: three substantial meals daily. A courteous and well-educated Kamaphibal was in charge of completing our education. We understood that this was our last and most difficult test...."

The well-educated Kamaphibal, by some strange exception, expounded political themes to them. On the domestic level, the policy of the Angkar aimed at fostering peaceful relations with all its neighbours and peace-loving nations.... But as the objective of Soviet imperialism was to dominate and to exploit the Third World to its advantage, the U.S.S.R. was not regarded as a friend; China helped Kampuchea without preconditions. She was a sister-nation. The aggressive imperialism of Vietnam was a constant danger....

"On April 4th," tells Oum Nal "we were given a new pack: pants, a black jacket with a red-white checkered krama (the traditional Cambodian scarf), constituting the uniform of the Red Khmers. At the end of the evening meal, we were served a sweet sticky rice pudding, a thing not to be forgotten.... the only dessert in a year! And then speeches, revolutionary songs.

The following morning, I assembled my group of 'technicians' for the last time. About thirty of us survived out of 397 intellectuals who, three months earlier, undertook this probationary period of screening.

A life as a beast of burden!

A truck discharged Dr. Oum Nal with half of his group in the village of Poy Sam Rong, 21 kilometers West of Battambang.... about 80 kilometers, as a crow flies, from Thailand. This village, a kind of elementary cell of Cambodian collectivism. It numbered then 560 families (with 1,000 organized into 4 regiments, that is, 12 battalions divided into three working teams according to age and physical stamina.)

The kitchen was communal and the meals taken together, where the children had their meals an hour before the adults. It was possible to eat as much rice as you wanted but prohibited to take anything away. The working day started at 6 o'clock in the morning, announced by a gong.

The children above five years of age rose an hour later and were responsible for certain chores, as, for instance, collecting manure.

There were no schools! The old men from the third task group had to teach revolutionary legends, songs, and dances. There was no weekly rest day and no days off for feasts.

"A life of a beast of burden," the doctor said. Even the Kamaphibals, who guided the regiments, were bored to death, as could be seen!

We worked under the command of the gong: work in the fields, meals from the racks, sleeping in the stables. It was dangerous to speak because of the 'watchmen' or spies! We knew nothing of the remaining universe, or even of the neighboring village. We even ignored the date of the calendar. We were surprised when we were told that the 15th, 16th, and 17th of April would be devoted to the celebration of the anniversary of victory.... the beginning of the era of happiness!

I decided to use this occasion for my escape. I left the village on April 16th at 7 o'clock in the evening."

Dr Oum Nal walked for 22 days, across the jungle most of the time, when one day Thailande peasents picked him up exhausted at the border....

Today, if the sores that were eating into his skin have healed, if his attacks of malaria and dysentery are less common, his eyes—several months after his return to France—are still reflecting an infinite sadness.
APPENDIX 4

[From Commonweal, Apr. 1, 1977]

TRANSFORMATION IN CAMBODIA

(By David P. Chandler)

THE MOST RADICALLY ALTERED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD

"Two thousand years of Cambodian history have virtually ended."

—Phnom Penh Radio, January 1976

In a little less than two years, i.e., since the liberation of Phnom Penh and Battambang in April 1975, the former Buddhist kingdom of Cambodia, which had weathered two thousand years of recorded history, a century of French control, six years of American bombing and perhaps five centuries (c. 800-1400) of grandeur, has transformed itself into what seems to be the most radically altered country in the world.

The transformation affects every aspect of Cambodian life. The country is no longer a kingdom, and Buddhism is no longer the state religion. The regime—which calls itself Democratic Kampuchea, but is known to most of its people as angkar, "the organization"—has moved millions of people out of towns and cities onto rural work-sites, in a process aimed at increasing agricultural production, fostering self-reliance, and destroying what it calls the "old society." Money is no longer used. Shops, schools and monasteries are closed. Transportation and property have been collectivized. There is no postal service. Western medicines are not prescribed, and the Cambodian language has been overhauled to root out foreign words. The population, officially a blend of "workers, peasants, and the revolutionary army," dresses in the black cotton pyjamas traditionally worn, at work, by poor Cambodian peasants. Gambling, drinking, polygamy and extramarital sex, are frowned upon, or worse; people who had called each other, in the past, "Sir," "Brother" and "Uncle"—to name only three Cambodian "pronouns"—must now address each other as "friend."

Political leadership has been collectivized, too, in contrast to the personalized rule of Prince Sihanouk (1941-1970) and the befuddled dictatorship of Field Marshal Lon Nol, whose Khmer Republic (1970-1975) was called (by Nixon) a "model of the Nixon Doctrine," the "old society," is seen as foreign, unequal, exploitative and corrupt. Its habits, hierarchies and economic relations have been swept aside.

What has taken their place? Is the revolution a "Cambodian" one? What are its roots, ideology, tactics and plans?

Nearly all the information we have comes from refugees or from officials of the regime. Cambodians who are happy with the revolution are inside Cambodia, but there is no way of hearing their opinions. Refugees, on the other hand, have by definition run away. Another problem with their testimony is that so many of them have escaped from northwest Cambodia, where radical politics before liberation were weak, rural class differences especially pronounced, and agricultural production higher than elsewhere in the country. For these reasons, the liberating forces there seem to have been especially vengeful and undisciplined. Stories about harsh conditions and atrocities come largely from this part of the country. But information on this point is ambiguous. The lack of refugees from other regions could mean that conditions there are better than in the northwest, or merely that the Thai border is too far away to reach on foot. Other refugees have gone to Vietnam; Cambodian officials told a Swedish diplomat early in 1976...

1 Printed by permission of Commonweal Publishing Co.
2 David P. Chandler, presently on sabbatical from Monash University in Australia, is working on a general history of Cambodia at the East Asian Research Center at Harvard.
that these included the entire Vietnamese population of Cambodia—perhaps 150,000 people—but unlike refugees in Thailand, they are inaccessible to outsiders.

Peasants have been "outside history" for many years. Cambodian records compiled before the arrival of the French in 1863 were written by and for the literate elite, and must reflect their scale of values. This means that we know very little, in quantitative or political terms, about the mass of Cambodian society, many of whom, for most of their history, appear to have been slaves of one sort or another. The frequency of locally-led rebellions in the nineteenth century—against the Thais, the Vietnamese, the French and local officials—suggests that Cambodian peasants were not as pacific as their own mythology, reinforced by the French, would lead us to believe. To understand their picture of the world, we should remember that for the first thousand years or so of the Christian era, Cambodians were heavily influenced by India, which gave them an alphabet, a court language, art-styles, two religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) and a fairly rigid, if often haphazard, sense of social hierarchies. In isolated villages—especially after the abandonment of Cambodia's great capital, at Angkor, in the fifteenth century—Cambodian peasant-slaves, harassed at will by people in authority, developed little sense of community or strength. The word for "to govern" an area was the same as the word "to consume." As in India, language and behavior were oriented toward differences in status. The hope of reincarnation in Buddhism was to improve one's place; conversely, power, however ruthlessly applied, was taken as proof of meritorious behavior—in another life.

**Effect on the Peasants**

How did this legacy affect peasants in the colonial era? The French were not drawn to this kind of question, preferring to reconstruct Cambodia's ancient temple nurture a small elite, and modernize the economy to provide surpluses of rice and rubber. Scholars know little of what actually went on. Did old elites break down, persist, or reappear? What happened to rural attitudes towards authority and success? Did families grow more or less cohesive? What were the effects of monetization, schooling and printed books? I put these questions to show how shaky our knowledge of Cambodian rural history often is. The same is true of the early independence period (1953-1970), the so-called "Sihanouk years." The Prince himself occupies the foreground, obscuring such important things as Cambodia's population boom, poorly planned mass education, the "revolution of rising expectations" and the effects on daily life of the Vietnamese civil war. To understand why so many Cambodians chose revolution in the 1970s, we need to know more about patterns of land ownership, malnutrition and indebtedness in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the growth of personal fortunes, and corruption, among the Phnom Penh elite; U.S. bombing patterns, after 1968; and the ideology of Cambodia's students, including those who went abroad.

The ideology of Democratic Kampuchea draws its strength and wording from Marxism, especially as acted out in China, without formally acknowledging the debt. Many leaders of the regime have Marxist pasts, some going back to the 1940s, when several thousand Cambodians—especially among those living in southern Vietnam—cast their lot with the Communist-led Viet Minh. After the Geneva Conference of 1954, when France withdrew from Indochina, an estimated 2,000 of these men and women chose to go to North Vietnam rather than live under Sihanouk or Ngo Dinh Diem. Leftists who stayed in Cambodia and formed a People's Party were ruthlessly suppressed by Sihanouk and his police. Others went underground, especially in the mountainous southwest. Meanwhile, in the 1950s and 1960s, a younger generation of Marxists, made up for the most part of Cambodians trained abroad or by French Marxists teaching in Cambodia, came of age and challenged Sihanouk's "Buddhist Socialist" regime. These "young intellectuals," or "Khmer Rouge," as Sihanouk called them, included many men who became leaders in Democratic Kampuchea—Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim, Son Sen and Ieng Sary, to name only four.

In the late 1960s, these two strands of Cambodian radicalism—old Viet Minh and young intellectuals—merged. At the height of the Vietnam war, many intellectuals fled to remote parts of the kingdom—including ones noted in the early 1950s for Viet Minh activity—to escape Sihanouk's police and to revolutionize their countrymen along Maoist lines. The northeastern parts of the kingdom, already a base and corridor for Vietnamese liberation forces, were liberated by the Cambodians fairly early, probably with Vietnamese help. By 1971—after Sihanouk had been toppled by a rightist coup—the Khmer Rouge occupied roughly two-thirds of Cambodia's territory, and controlled perhaps half its popu-
The youngest and poorest segments of society, it seems, responded enthusiastically to the revolution. Those who disliked it fled, if they could, to government zones, swelling the population of Phnom Penh to some three million people. Others were "re-educated," or killed. American bombing—one of Dr. Kissinger's "bargaining chips"—and the violence of the civil war forced everyone in the kingdom to take sides.

In 1973, after the Paris Agreements, Vietnamese influence over the Khmer Rouge diminished. This development reduced Prince Sihanouk's freedom to maneuver, as head of an ostensibly pro-Chinese government-in-exile, and allowed the Khmer Rouge to replace pro-Sihanouk cadres with their own people as they accelerated their experiments, on Cambodian soil, with Maoist ideas of revolution. So-called "co-operative farms" (baokak) were introduced in 1973. Other features of life in liberated zones included all-night political and cultural rallies, called miting, after the English word, in both Cambodian and Vietnamese; systematic puritanism affecting dress, hair-styles and sexual behavior; the abolition of money, badges of rank and private property; and a stress on collective leadership, ownership and self-reliance. Foreign models were played down to make the revolution seem a Cambodian one without roots in the "old society." In some areas, the process of liberation went on for several years; in others, especially those liberated late in the war, it was violent and brief.

The first months of peace in Battambang, for example, were harsh. After years of propaganda from their leaders and pummeling from U.S. and Lon Nol aircraft, Khmer Rouge soldiers, filled with what one of them called "uncontrolled hatred" took apart a pair of T-28 aircraft with their bare hands, and "would have eaten them, if possible, according to a witness. At the same time, people who held authority under Lon Nol began to disappear for "study." A morbid jingle declared that "Khmer krohom somlap, min del prap" ("the Khmer Rouge kill, but never explain"). By mid-summer, however, the killings stopped, and the transformation of Cambodian rural society, in the northwest, began in earnest.

By this time, the people of Battambang and Phnom Penh—perhaps two and a half million of them—had been moved into the countryside by the revolutionary army, organized into work-teams and ordered to produce their own food. The work-teams were made up of groups of 10, 30, 100, 300 and 900 people, led at each level, except the lowest, by three workers placed in charge of "work" (the tasks at hand), "politics" (culture and morale) and "economics" (food and tools). This structure, modeled on a military one, proved to be an effective instrument of Khmer Rouge control. Hours were long and food was scarce, although the "organization" made a point of feeding work-teams better than they fed "unproductive" people.

What was revolutionary about the process, in Cambodian terms, was the value placed on manual labor almost as an end in itself. In the "old society" peasants placed a premium on individual freedom, and on leisure of an unsupervised kind. To make up for this they are now told that they own the land and factories where they work, and even the revolution itself. Collective self-reliance or autarky, as preached by the regime, contrasts sharply with what might be called the slave mentality that suffused pre-revolutionary Cambodia and made it so "peaceful" and "charming" to the elite and to most outsiders—for perhaps two thousand years. A refugee from Battambang recalls a Khmer Rouge making this point at a miting in dramatic terms. The speech went something like this:

In the old days, the big people told us we had independence. What kind of independence was that? What had we built? Well, they built an independence monument. Where did they build it? In the capital. Who saw the thing? The big people's children. Did country people see it? No, they didn't; they saw only photos. The big people's children went in and out of Cambodia, going here and there, and then they came back, to control our kind of people. What do we do, now, in contrast to all this? We don't build monuments like that. Instead, by raising embankments and digging irrigation canals, the children of Cambodia build their own independence monuments, ones that they can see, and their children, too . . .

The theme of self-reliance is stressed in Cambodia's constitution, promulgated in January of last year, and derives in part from the dissertation that one of Cambodia's leaders, Khieu Samphan, wrote in France in 1959. The phrase is sometimes known as autarky, and Khieu Samphan used this word in his address to the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations held in Colombo last year. In cultural and economic terms, the word has been attacked by T. S. Eliot, used by Stalin, and defended by Mussolini. In the Cambodian case, in 1976, autarky makes sense, both in terms of recent experience—American intervention, and what is seen as the
Western-induced corruption of previous regimes—and in terms of Cambodia's long history of conflict with Vietnam. Cambodians are urged daily by their radio, and four times in the constitution, to "build and defend" their country against unspecified enemies. What was wrong with the "old society," these broadcasts suggest, was exploitation (literally, in Cambodian, "riding and stomping") and outsiders. Words that suggest foreign influence—such as "Communist," "socialist" or "Marxist," to name only three—do not appear in the constitution; French words are no longer used in Cambodian conversation; and the constitution condemns "so-called humanitarian" aid. Autarky is the keynote of Cambodia's ideology today, and certainly explains changing "Cambodia," in English ("Cambodge" in French) to "Kampuchea," reflecting local pronunciation, as if Argentina had changed the "g" in its name to an "h."

Self-reliance also explains turning away from Cambodia's past to make a society where there are "no rich and no poor, no exploiters and no exploited," and where, in the words of the constitution, people are free to "have no religious beliefs." Instead, everyone is at work, "happily" building dams, canals and embankments to provide water for two or even three rice crops a year—an achievements unequaled since the days of Angkor. Can the regime recapture the grandeur of Angkor without duplicating the slavery (and by implication, the elite) that made Angkor what it was? Is the price for liberation, in human terms, too high? Surely, as a friend of mine has written, we Americans with our squalid record in Cambodia should be "cautiously optimistic" about the new regime, "or else shut up." At the same time, I might feel less cautious and more optimistic if I were able to hear the voices of people I knew in the Cambodian countryside fourteen years ago, telling me about the revolution in their own words.
APPENDIX 5
[From the New York Times, May 2, 1977]

REFUGEES DEPICT GRIM CAMBODIA BESET BY HUNGER

(By David A. Andelman)

BANGKOK, Thailand, May 1—Two years after the Communist victory, Cambodia is pictured by refugees arriving here as a desolate country, beset by crop failures and disintegrating irrigation systems.

A sense of aimlessness and drift, they say, seems to pervade the land. Similar reports are given by defectors from the Cambodian Army, by the few diplomats who have visited the country, by agricultural experts and intelligence sources.

But the evidence is fragmentary. Most of the refugees and defectors are from the western third of Cambodia, the part of the country that adjoins Thailand. No one is allowed in to tour the land and make independent observations.

Nevertheless, a general picture emerges from interviews of spreading hunger and disease and of the destruction of Cambodia's old ways by the victorious Communists. The victors began the process two years ago with the mass evacuation of cities and capped it late last year with the enforced collectivization of farms into village-wide cooperatives.

The purges that took hundreds of thousands of lives in the aftermath of the Communist capture of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, have apparently ended for the most part, according to the informants. But the new system is said to function largely through fear, with the leadership making itself felt at local levels through what is described as "the organization."

According to army defectors and to intelligence reports, there has been a sudden increase in the Cambodian armed forces recently, with enforced recruiting and the assignment of troops to civilian work not performed adequately by local farm workers.

There are reports that cities have begun to grow again to some degree, and Phnom Penh and Battambang, the one-time principal center of a major rice-growing area, are mentioned in particular. Diplomats said that the central market in Phnom Penh has begun functioning again with some vegetables and meat available occasionally. But, they added, there is still no money anywhere. Payment seems to be by chit or through credits.

FOOD PROBLEM IN VILLAGES

The informants agree that the greatest change has taken place in the Cambodian villages and that the principal problem there is food.

Western intelligence reports say that the 1976 rice crop may have been only half as large as the one the year before and that that one was not particularly good. Refugees from western Cambodia say that the 1976 crop was anywhere from 30% to 60% percent below that of 1975.

In most villages, they say, people are eating only two meals a day, instead of the customary three, and their food consists of a thin rice gruel, sometimes with a banana leaf floating in it.

Among those describing the farmer's experience under Communist rule was Gaji Mahamath, 29 years old, a Moslem who lived most of his life in and around the northwestern village of Ampil until he left for Thailand the last week in March. He and his family have always been rice farmers, and in a good year, he said, his village of about 100 families produced 1,500 sacks of rice.

AUTHORITIES TAKE SHARE

In 1975, the first harvest after the Communist takeover, the crop was nearly as good—almost 1,200 sacks. Last fall, though, the village produced only 800

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sacks. The refugee said that the authorities took 600 sacks in 1975 and 300 last year.

Tap Kran, a 35-year-old refugee from Reamsonal in western Cambodia, said that when the Communists "first came into our village, they told us that now our land was ours that we would no longer have to pay a rent to any landlord or money lender." He had always paid about 10 percent of his rice harvest—about 20 sacks—each year to his landlord, and while he did not regard that as unbearable, he rather liked the new Communist philosophy of no rent until they took away his land.

"We still worked very hard the first year," he said. But then, he said, the Communists "took away half our harvest, and we found that no matter how hard we worked, we still got only our two bowls of rice gruel each day."

"So while usually we paid attention when we plowed, not to skip any space, to plow neat rows close together, last year no one paid any attention," he said. "We plowed like that, this space, that space. And there was nothing to kill the weeds and the dikes broke."

**PATTERN OF CONTROL**

There seemed in general to be a broad pattern of Communist actions in many agricultural regions. According to the refugees, six party representatives would generally be assigned, to each village, and the families would be called together periodically for lectures on self-reliance, vigilance and above all hard work.

In many villages the refugees said, the people were then divided into different work details. Some went to the fields to plow, while others, particularly in villages along roads, were ordered to destroy all the old houses and build new ones hundreds of yards farther back into the jungle.

In the fields, the Communists were said to have ordered the farmers to begin knocking down the small dikes that separate one rice paddie from the next and that gave the Southeast Asian countryside its checkerboard pattern. The refugees pointed out that the Communists correctly perceived the dikes as denoting land ownership and that they stressed that now all land was owned in common.

The peasants made no objection, the refugees said, and soon broad open spaces appeared surrounded only by large, permanent dikes—each area covering several acres of land.

**ONE END FLOODED, OTHER DRY**

But what the peasants had not told the Communists, two refugees said, was that the smaller dikes performed a purpose other than denoting land ownership; they helped in the water as well, compensating for slight irregularities in the land.

With the fields opened, the refugees said, the rains at times flooded one end five or six feet deep, leaving the other end nearly dry.

Rice stalks reportedly grew tall and thin in the deep water, producing only a few small kernels of rice at the top or dying as they were submerged by the water. At the other end of the same fields, the refugees noted, rice dried and withered at the height of the rainy season.

Some workers were sent quickly to some fields when village Communist leaders realized the large dikes were breaking apart. Farmers reported constant patching, filling and rebuilding at the height of the rains. By last fall, the refugees said, nothing in their area seemed to work.

In many villages, workers were said to be prostrate from exhaustion or disease, particularly malaria, cholera and dysentery. In July 1975, Pol Pot, the Cambodian Prime Minister, told the Vietnam press agency that more than 80 percent of the Cambodian population had been weakened by malaria, and that figure is increasing.

Virtually no refugee arrives now in Thailand without one form or another of a degenerative illness. Some villages, refugees said, had as many as 200 to 400 workers unable to go to the fields because of illness.

As a result, the refugees reported, acreage being harvested dropped, and by the end of the last harvest season much of last year's rice crop in some areas was either rotting in permanently flooded fields or, in the drier areas, withering for lack of retained water. Other crops were also having severe difficulties.

Citing the huge population shifts, one agricultural economist in Bangkok with exclusive experience in Cambodia, said: "People were working land they were not familiar with, using techniques imposed from the outside with no motivation for new initiative on their part."

Then, referring to the plans for a self-sufficient pastoral society, the economist said: "The Communists were so bent on working toward their long-visualized
theoretical structure that they ignored the structure of Cambodian village and agricultural life that's worked for hundreds of years.

**SYSTEM TAKES HOLD**

By early this year, the system the Communists installed had reportedly taken hold throughout the country. In each collectivized village, generally composed of 200 to 400 families, there is said to be a top rank of three Communist civilians, nearly all outsiders, headed by one chief, and three lower personnel. The six members of the leadership tend to live apart from the rest of the villagers in their own compounds or on occasion in separate houses.

Nearly every refugee reported that his Communist leaders lived better than everyone else. The leaders, the refugees said, are allowed to keep their own pigs and chickens, grow small vegetable gardens or take the pigs and chickens of other villagers for their own use.

The refugees said that villagers were constantly kept in line by references to "angka," the all-powerful "organization" that was said to oversee every aspect of life. If one did not follow the revolutionary precepts, the refugees added, representatives of the "organization" would come and the person would disappear.

This happened less often as the months wore on. But the fear was constantly there.

**STATIONED IN CAMPS**

Soldiers who had defected from the Communists said that no armed troops were ever stationed in villages or towns but rather in camps, containing as many as 1,000 men. The defectors said the camps were placed in jungle areas accessible to a dozen or more villages with networks of runners or couriers who could be used to call for help. On a moment’s notice, 50, 100 or more men could and often were mobilized, the defectors reported.

According to both defectors and intelligence reports, there seems to be a conscious effort to expand substantially the size of the Cambodian armed forces from the 50,000 or 60,000 men at the end of the war two years ago to perhaps double that number by the end of this year.

To do this, local commanders are said to be impressing villagers into service, expanding small units to 300 men the strength known as a small battalion, and small battalions to the 1,000-man great battalion, or regiment.

Defectors told of being issued a rifle and 120 bullets for patrol work in the forests, then being required to return all the shells or account for each one expended. Several defectors told of seeing M-79 grenades and B-40 rockets in storage, but none had ever used one in field exercises, which take place with increasing regularity.

**INFORMATION ON CAPITAL MEAGER**

Information on what is happening in Phnom Penh is sketchy at best. Diplomats who have visited or are stationed now in the city believe that only a handful of the ministries are still functioning there and with limited staffs. These, they say, are perhaps only the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Agriculture and Defense.

There are nine nations with missions in Cambodia—China, North Korea, Albania, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Egypt.

The identity of the national leadership is the subject of scores of rumors. Diplomats noted that messages of congratulation on the second anniversary of the Communist takeover were addressed in order to Khiem Sampham, chairman of the State Presidium, Nuon Chea, chairman of the People’s Representative Assembly and Prime Minister Pol Pot. Many believe that Pol Pot is a revolutionary pseudonym for Saloth Sar.

Saloth Sar was identified by defectors during the war years as secretary general of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cambodia. He has not been mentioned at all since the fall of Phnom Penh two years ago.

A "SECOND LEADERSHIP"

The Cuban Ambassador has told friends that there is a shadowy "second leadership" that no Westerner has ever met or will ever see and that is responsible for the most draconian measures of control.

Some analysts believe that the Communist Party structure itself, which has never been mentioned by any official Communist publication and which may be headed by Saloth Sar, may be "the organization."
Some foreign advisers have reportedly begun to appear in the big cities. Chinese technicians have been seen in both Phnom Penh and Battambang, though confined to compounds at the airport.

Relations with neighboring Vietnam are almost as sour as those with the United States. Cambodia curtly rejected an American request to allow a trip to Phnom Penh by the mission that visited Vietnam and Laos earlier this year to inquire about Americans still listed as missing in the Vietnam war.

There are continuing reports of clashes along the Vietnam-Cambodia border and large numbers of refugees have reportedly fled into Vietnam, particularly through the eastern Cambodian area known as the Parrot’s Beak. Cambodian refugees arriving by boat at Lam Saeng in Thailand said that some 3,000 Cambodians had fled to Phu Quoc, an island off the Cambodian coast that is controlled by Vietnam.

All have been welcomed by the Vietnamese, the refugees arriving in Thailand said, and each family has been given more than two acres of land to farm if they are farmers, or a boat if they are fishermen.

This drain of refugees continues despite the minefields and armed Communist patrols along all of Cambodia’s borders. Nearly 25,000 have fled to Thailand since the fall of Phnom Penh—more than 6,000 then going on to France and nearly 5,000 to the United States. Thousands more have fled to Vietnam.

What all of this has done to Cambodia’s population is still only a matter for speculation. The last real census was taken in the mid-1960’s, and at the war’s end Western estimates put the population at about 7 million, though how many died in the fighting from 1970 to 1975 may never be known.

Asked why he had fled to Thailand even though he knew a crowded refugee camp here would probably be his final destination, Tap Krean said:

“If I stay there, I die anyway—a few weeks, a few months, from my malaria, or the organization, or that rice gruel, who knows. At least here, I have no future, but I have my three bowls of rice a day.”